Death is melodrama and real life. Death is the skeleton in the gallery that doesn't scare us any more. Death makes us wonder what it's doing here. Death makes us wonder what we are.

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The jokes. Real stinkers. He was going to put a spot in the middle of his forehead and hang a potato from his crotch and become a dick-tater.

Deane didn't have many clothes and some of his favorite clothing, like his Leafs shirt, got ruined with bleach. They traded shirts. Deane gave Johnny a black sports shirt. He noticed right away how nice it smelled. Deane said he washed it in Tide. He asked Johnny if he knew why. He said (with a lisp) because it was cold out tide.

One night a few weeks before Christmas (the last one) they were standing on the porch after supper and Deane said he couldn't drive his car over the curb without damaging the bumper.

He said he couldn't get it up, and winked at Johnny. But it was worth a try, he said as he handed him the cell-phone. Hold this anyway, he added.

As opposed to his cock, he meant.

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On Friday afternoon Deane told him that he'd shaved off his pubic hair. He didn't know why. He was seeing himself laid out at the morgue. He wanted to be clean.

Johnny was sitting on a battered park bench at the beginning of that green strip at the end of Thing Street overlooking the lake. There weren't any houses on this side of the street. When his mother was alive he used to go "home" to Maypole City by train. He would look up from the tracks below and see the big houses and wonder what they were like. Now he knew. He looked down and didn't wonder anything at all about the train and where it was going. He knew that too. He could see the outdoor tennis courts of some Hogtown club. They were covered with tents. They look stuffed.

The traffic reminded him of Deane and his mother and his last visits to them. He was angry with his mother because after bringing her a computer all the way from Hogtown she took her eighty-year-old boyfriend's advice that she couldn't use it. Too blind. Before he stormed out she asked me if there were anything he wanted. He said the old fart's obituary. She slapped his face. He couldn't grieve for her the way he was grieving for Deane.

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Serge drove him in to see Deane at the funeral home in Ossington. Along the lakeshore, in his Lada. Deane drove home that way every night.

The Hardener Distressway....

On either side a wasteland of high-rise condos and cheap townhouses. The funeral home was a converted fire hall off an exit ramp at the town line. It was in the middle of nowhere. There were a lot of cars in the lot.